

the cost of the drugs they need. These seniors worked hard and paid into the system their entire lives, but now must choose between buying their prescriptions or their groceries. Seniors tell me they have to skip their medication to make it last longer.

I recently sent out a questionnaire to constituents in my District in Houston to learn what they think Congress' priorities should be. I received many responses from seniors saying Congress must act immediately to help them with the high cost of prescription drugs.

I heard from seniors like Norma Keyes of Houston who writes, "I need help with my prescriptions. I spend over half my Social Security on prescriptions. I can't get enough money to pay for my house and taxes."

Joyce Belyeu wrote, "I am now retired after 53 years of working. I have Medicare and a supplement, but no prescription drug benefit at all. I can't afford the \$250 per month for prescription drugs, so I can not take the prescription daily. I skip days."

We need to do better, and this Congress must do it.

TIME TO DO RIGHT BY OUR SENIORS ON PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

(Mr. SHOWS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SHOWS. Mr. Speaker, I have had the opportunity to visit with many of my senior citizens to talk about the high cost of medicine.

Let me tell you about one of my constituents, Ms. Lucille Bruce. Ms. Bruce lives in Clinton, Mississippi. She enjoyed all the freedoms of being a senior citizen until she started to pay the high cost of prescription medication and had to move in with her daughter. She pays hundreds of dollars each month for prescription medicine while living on a fixed income.

Ms. Bruce told me without her daughter, she did not know how she would make it, and she wonders and is concerned about seniors who do not have the family support that she has. She often feels a burden on her daughter. She is going to have some more hospital visits, and it may result in more costs to her and her daughter.

Because of Ms. Bruce and millions of others, I am filing a discharge petition today, H.R. 664, the Prescription Drug Fairness for Seniors Act. We cannot wait; our seniors sure cannot wait. For every day of inaction there are seniors out there doing without medication.

It is time to do the right thing and make them favorite customers, just like the large HMOs and the Federal Government.

Mr. Speaker, folks like Ms. Bruce need our help.

PROVIDE A PRESCRIPTION DRUG BENEFIT FOR SENIORS NOW

(Mr. DOGGETT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1

minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DOGGETT. Mr. Speaker, when two people walk into the same pharmacy and one, who has no insurance, is forced to pay 136 percent more than the other, who is one of the pharmaceutical industry's most favored customers, something is very wrong. That something wrong is price discrimination against seniors for whom these pharmaceuticals are vital to sustain their health.

That is exactly what I found when I surveyed our local pharmacies in Austin, Texas. This occurs, not as a result of any fault on the part of the local business, but because the pharmaceutical industry discriminates against the uninsured.

Last September, I secured the first vote in this Congress to outlaw that type of price discrimination. Unfortunately, the Republican members of the Committee on Ways and Means joined with the pharmaceutical industry to block that initiative. But with today's discharge petition, we are renewing the struggle, the struggle to see that America's seniors are dealt with fairly and that they have access to prescription drugs. We must put a stop to this wrongful price discrimination.

Join us, renew the effort by signing this petition to end the discrimination against seniors.

CONGRESS MUST ACT ON MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG BENEFIT

(Mr. MCGOVERN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, the time has come to end the excuses and begin the action on providing a prescription drug benefit for all our seniors. The outrageously high cost of prescription drugs is forcing people to choose between their medicines and their groceries.

Congress must act now, because, sadly, we cannot expect the pharmaceutical industry to do the right thing and lower their prices. It is now the responsibility of this Congress to provide a comprehensive Medicare prescription drug benefit and to ensure that all Americans can afford their prescriptions. Our goal should be nothing short of a comprehensive benefit.

The Republican leadership of this Congress has dragged its feet on this issue for too long. The American people want a vote, and they want it now.

I call on my colleagues to join together and sign the discharge petition to force a vote. This leadership must act now. Our senior citizens, who have raised our families, who have worked in our factories, who have fought our wars, deserve nothing less than a comprehensive drug benefit. The excuses must end and the action must begin.

ACTION NEEDED NOW ON PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

(Mr. TIERNEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. TIERNEY. Mr. Speaker, today we have heard all stories from our constituents who have to choose between medication and food or rent. We all know that by paying higher prices than individuals anywhere else in the world, Americans are subsidizing the drugs that benefit others. We know that private prescription drug expenditures have been growing at a rate of 17 percent a year.

We do not deny the drug manufacturers, who enjoy the highest profits of any industry profits of any industry, engage in important, sometimes life-saving research that should be encouraged. But the burden should not be on the elderly and those least able to afford it.

Let us clear up one misconception now: H.R. 664 does not mandate price controls, but uses market forces such as volume buying.

The United States makes large public commitments to drug research already, through taxes and the National Institutes of Health research money. While companies in the United States generally face an effective taxation rate of about 27 percent, drug companies, through generous tax credits and benefits, were effectively taxed at roughly 16 percent. Financial encouragement of research should not be eliminated and would not be under the legislation we seek to bring to the floor.

During the 1984 Waxman-Hatch Act effort and the 1990 Medicaid debate, drug companies complained they would have to cut research, yet they subsequently contradicted themselves by expanding it instead. We merely seek to strike some balance. With the many public benefits received by the drug companies also comes some social responsibility.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 2366, SMALL BUSINESS LIABILITY REFORM ACT OF 2000

Mr. LINDER. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 423 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 423

Resolved, That at any time after the adoption of this resolution the Speaker may, pursuant to clause 2(b) of rule XVIII, declare the House resolved into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for consideration of the bill (H.R. 2366) to provide small businesses certain protections from litigation excesses and to limit the product liability of nonmanufacturer product sellers. The first reading of the bill shall be dispensed with. General debate shall be confined to the bill and shall not exceed one hour equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on the Judiciary. After general debate the bill shall be considered for